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Letter dated 16 January 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to thank the Security Council for its President's statement to the press on 15 January 2003 following informal consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SC/7634-AFR/543), in which the Council condemned "in the strongest terms the massacres and systematic violations of human rights perpetrated by the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) and the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) national troops".

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is grateful to the United Nations for having ordered a prompt inquiry, by which the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) established the facts relating to the atrocities perpetrated by the coalition forces of the MLC and the RCD/N in north-eastern Congo, particularly in the region of Ituri.

According to the information in our possession, adults and children were mutilated, in particular by being subjected to organ removal, and others were savagely murdered, while still others were victims of cannibalism. Mass rapes were also committed by the troops of the MLC and the RCD/N. In some cases, the troops forced children to rape their parents or grandparents in public and before their families.

These intolerable, repulsive, unacceptable and detestable acts were acknowledged by the person chiefly responsible for these abuses, namely the President of the MLC, Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba.

MONUC publicly stated that its investigators had gathered sufficient evidence of looting, massacres, rapes and cannibalism committed by the forces of the MLC and RCD/N in the north-eastern part of the country.

In this connection, my Government would request the Security Council to authorize publication of MONUC's preliminary report in its entirety, in order that the entire world may appreciate the extent of the horror and abuses committed by the MLC and RCD/N as part of an operation entitled "operation clean the slate", which was presented to the people of Orientale Province as a "vaccination campaign" ... A vaccination campaign that spread horror and desolation throughout Orientale Province and the region of Ituri, targeting in particular indigenous Pygmies and the Nande ethnic group.

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My Government believes that this extermination of a population group, i.e. Pygmies, and this methodical destruction of an ethnic group, i.e. the Nande, may be qualified as genocide and ethnic cleansing under the rules of international law. They are a crime against humanity par excellence and an insult to the human conscience and the civilized world as it enters the twenty-first century.

In the face of horror beyond words and bestiality and barbarity that defy the imagination, verified by the United Nations itself, my Government believes that the Security Council must fully shoulder its responsibilities and take all measures authorized under the Charter of the United Nations to punish the perpetrators, authors and those responsible for these atrocities and crimes against humanity, and to take a series of measures to bring an immediate end to the mass violations of human rights and international humanitarian law being committed in Orientale Province, particularly in Ituri.

My Government requests the Security Council, which explicitly named the President of the MLC, Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba, as the one responsible for these abuses, to ensure that the alleged perpetrators, authors and politicians and military personnel implicated in these horrible incidents, which repel national and international public opinion, answer for their acts.

More specifically, with a view to ending impunity and ensuring that the President of the MLC, Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba, and the others responsible for the abuses committed in Orientale Province, particularly in Ituri, are brought to justice, my Government explicitly requests the Security Council to establish an international criminal court to try all persons alleged to have committed acts of genocide or other serious violations of international humanitarian law in Ituri.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter as an official document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ileka **Atoki**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative